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PTI moves to disqualify Abro, JUI-F expels its senator over vote

• Opposition leader warns 27th Amendment undermines judiciary, rule of law and media freedom • Fears another legislation may follow to further consolidate 'absolute power'

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The PTI has been left with hardly any options to take action against Senator Saifullah Abro, who defied party policy by voting in favour of the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment on Monday but later announced his resignation, while the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) expelled its senator, Ahmed Khan, for the same action.

PTI Senator Ali Zafar, while speaking to *Dawn*, said: "I have issued instructions under Article 63A. He [Senator Abro] violated them and is disqualified accordingly."

Replying to a question, he said the party has distanced itself from Senator Abro, who has been removed from all communication channels, including the parliamentary party's WhatsApp group.

PTI Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram, speaking to *Dawn*, said a show-cause notice would be issued to Senator Abro as a first step.

"In the past, some MNAs openly voted in favour of the 26th Constitutional Amendment and were terminated from the party. All possible actions will be taken against him for selling mandate. The Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP] will also be approached to immediately terminate his senatorship," he said.

Mr Akram noted that the PTI Central Media Department held five press conferences across the country on Monday, denouncing the "self-serving constitutional amendments" and pledging to raise its voice against this contentious change on a daily basis.

Former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser, speaking to *Dawn*, said Senator Abro betrayed the party and violated the oath he took when becoming a senator.

"People never respect those who violate their oaths and turn against their party. His [Senator Abro's] family and children will not gain respect and will face criticism on every platform," he said.

Apart from Senator Abro, JUI-F Senator Ahmed Khan also voted in favour of the 27th Amendment, defying his party's instructions.

The JUI-F announced his expulsion in a statement, saying the decision was made on the recommendation of the party's parliamentary leader, Senator Maulana Ata-ur-Rehman, and Provincial Ameer Balochistan, Senator Maulana Abdul Wasay.

The statement added that the central party has immediately expelled Senator Khan and asked him to resign from his Senate seat.

If he fails to do so, the JUI-F will approach the ECP for his disqualification.

'Nefarious design'

Earlier, speaking at a press conference in Islamabad alongside PTI parliamentarians Mashal Yousafzai, Maulana Nasim Ali Shah, and Muhammad Mobeen Arif Jutt, the party's senior leader Latif Khosa said the "person-specific, self-serving, and agenda-driven" 27th Constitutional Amendment was a continuation of the 26th Amendment, aimed at fulfilling the same nefarious design.

He warned that the legislation could be followed by a 28th Amendment to further consolidate "absolute power", likening it to attempts by dictators like Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Ziaul Haq, and Pervez Musharraf to extend their rule indefinitely.

Mr Khosa noted that such figures were not remembered as national benefactors, adding that the true benefactors upheld constitutional supremacy, served the public, and returned looted mandates.

He described the grant of lifetime immunity as unprecedented, contrasting it with temporary immunity under Article 248, which did not shield General Musharraf from high treason charges.

He added that this new protection extended to a president facing major corruption cases and to army commanders, without legal precedent.

Mr Khosa warned that it effectively gave rulers a licence to act with impunity and might violate Article 126 of the Constitution, which required laws to conform to Islamic principles.

He also said the Supreme Court's authority was being undermined by the creation of a Federal Constitutional Court under the 27th Amendment, staffed with judges favourable to the executive, threatening judicial independence.

Addressing a press conference at the party office in Karachi, PTI Sindh chief Haleem Adil Sheikh called the 27th Constitutional Amendment "a burial of the 1973 Constitution," saying it had "destroyed" the foundations of Pakistan's democratic and judicial system.

He added that the rule of law, judicial independence, and media freedom no longer existed in the country.

Kalbe Ali in Islamabad and Imran Ayub in Karachi also contributed to this report

Renowned educationist dies at 82

By Shoaib Ahmed

LAHORE: Dr Arfa Syeda Zehra, an educationist, human rights activist, and a leading exponent of Urdu language and literature, passed away in Lahore on Monday at the age of 82 after a prolonged illness.

Born in Lahore on July 10, 1943, she had been under treatment at Sheikh Zayed Hospital. According to her family, her funeral will be held on Tuesday (today) at Jamia Masjid Askari 5.

Dr Zehra earned her PhD in History from the University of Hawaii, USA, in 1983, where she also completed her Master's in Asian Studies the same year.

She obtained her Master's degree in Urdu from Government College, Lahore, in 1964, and her BA (Hons) from Lahore College for Women in 1963.

She served as a professor in the History Department at Forman Christian College and was also the chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women.

From 2002 to 2005, she was a member of the Punjab Public Service Commission, and from 1989 to 2002, she served as the principal of Government College for Women, Gulberg.

Human rights activist

Dr Zehra was also a renowned human rights activist and scholar.

She had served as special adviser to the prime minister on education and national harmony affairs during the caretaker set-up in 2023.

Recognised for her deep understanding of Urdu language and literature, Dr Zehra specialised in intellectual history and South Asian social issues.

Beyond academia, she was a familiar presence at literary conferences and on television forums.

Dr Zehra was widely admired in literary circles for her command of Urdu and her passionate advocacy for its continued use.

DR ARFA Syeda Zehra — a human rights activist — championed Urdu language and youth engagement.—Facebook

She championed access to books and called for a "literary revolution" among Pakistan's youth to revive national pride in their language. She often spoke about how classism and colonialism had shaped perceptions of Urdu and its speakers.

Her literary influences included Ghalib and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

Widespread grief was expressed across Lahore's literary community following her passing. Razi Ahmed, chairman of the board of governors of the Lahore Arts Council, and Mehboob Alam, its executive director, paid tribute to her contributions.

The family of the late revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz also issued a statement, saying: "The Faiz family is deeply saddened by the loss of a towering public intellectual and indefatigable crusader for women's rights, closely associated with the work of the Faiz Foundation." Literary figure Qasim Jaffri also recalled his memories of Dr Zehra, saying he first met her as a child since she was a friend of his elder sister. He remembered her as a great exponent of Urdu language and literature, blessed with a sharp memory and the ability to speak effortlessly on subjects ranging from literature to Sufism.

No 'connection' between Imran and PM immunity clause: Sanaullah

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Monday rubbished the notion that the status of incarcerated former premier Imran Khan had any bearing on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's withdrawal of proposed immunity for the top office as part of the 27th Constitutional Amendment.

Government senators Anusha Rahman and Khalil Tahir Sandhu had tabled a proposal for the 27th Amendment bill to extend the immunity currently enjoyed by the president under Article 248 of the Constitution to include the prime minister.

The clause sought to extend presidential immunity to the prime minister, effectively barring criminal proceedings against the premier during the term in office.

Article 248 of the Constitution stipulates that "no criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be instituted or continued against the president or a governor in any court during his term of office".

However, PM Shehbaz had ordered the clause's withdrawal on Sunday, saying that the premier must remain "fully accountable".

Separately, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar had said that PM Shehbaz told him earlier that "he had no interest in getting immunity", owing to the executive nature of his role as the prime minister.

Questioned in an interview on a *Geo News* show about speculation that the clause was withdrawn because it could potentially benefit the PTI founder, Mr Sanaullah said: "No. If we had intended to do this, we could also have done it in a way that the benefit would apply only from today." He said the prime minister made a very "democratic" decision and he should be congratulated for it.

The premier's aide added that the premier's office was not a constitutional one but an executive and elected office, thus "it should remain answerable to the people".

PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui passes away

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui passed away on Monday after a brief illness, his son confirmed.

His family earlier said that he had not been placed on a ventilator but was admitted to an intensive care unit due to breathing difficulties.

In a statement, the senator's family said that Mr Siddiqui had been receiving treatment at a local hospital in Islamabad for the past few days due to respiratory distress.

IRFAN Siddiqui

President Asif Ali Zardari extended his condolences to the senator's family on their loss, according to a statement from the President's House.

Paying tribute to the PML-N leader, President Zardari said the late senator had made "immense contributions" to democracy in Pakistan.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also extended his condolences and praised Mr Siddiqui as a "champion of high traditions in both journalism and politics".

Earlier, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry claimed that the PML-N leader had been put on a ventilator after his health had worsened.

"Senior politician and important PML-N leader Siddiqui is extremely unwell. He has been put on a ventilator due to severe illness," said Mr Chaudhry, who is also a PML-N leader, in a post on social media platform X.

KP moves IHC against denial of CM Afridi-Imran meeting

• Accuses Adiala jail authorities and Punjab officials of defying court order
• Names federation, Punjab govt, jail administration as respondents

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Shah Faisal Utmankhel on Monday filed a contempt of court petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) over the non-compliance of a judicial order that directed authorities to allow KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi to meet the incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan at Adiala jail.

The petition, filed by Advocate General Shah Faisal on behalf of CM Afridi, stated that despite a clear order from the IHC, the Adiala jail administration and relevant authorities failed to permit the meeting, thereby committing contempt of court. Before submitting the petition, Mr Faisal also completed biometric verification at the IHC registry.

According to the petition, "The refusal to implement the Islamabad High Court's direction to allow the chief minister to meet the PTI founder constitutes deliberate disobedience and undermines the authority of the judiciary." It requested the initiation of contempt proceedings against the officials and departments responsible for defying the court order.

The respondents named in the petition include the Federation of Pakistan, the Punjab government, the Adiala jail administration, and the Punjab home secretary. The petition also cited previous decisions of both the larger and division benches of the IHC concerning visitation rights and compliance with judicial directives.

The filing comes after Chief Minister Sohail Afridi was, for the second time since assuming office, denied a meeting with the PTI founder despite a court order explicitly allowing it.

Earlier, a three-member bench of the Islamabad High Court, headed by Chief Justice Sardar Mohammad Sarfraz Dogar and comprising justices Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Muhammad Azam Khan, had suspended a single-bench ruling that struck down a clause in the Punjab Prison Rules barring prisoners from making political speeches. However, the larger bench directed the Adiala jail authorities to allow CM Afridi and other designated visitors to meet Imran Khan in accordance with the law and the standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Despite this order, the Adiala jail administration reportedly stopped the KP chief minister's convoy near the prison gates, prompting PTI leaders to stage a brief sit-in before returning without meeting the party founder.

In its earlier ruling, the IHC larger bench had heard multiple petitions concerning the enforcement of visitation rights and the suspension of restrictions on political expression during jail meetings.

The Punjab government, represented by Advocate General Amjad Pervez, had filed an intra-court appeal challenging the single-bench verdict that nullified the clause prohibiting political speeches by prisoners.

The provincial government argued that the restriction was essential for maintaining discipline and order in prisons. It contended that the single bench had declared the clause void without hearing the Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) or the Advocate General Punjab — both of whom are mandatory respondents in cases concerning statutory provisions.

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